

PAM DEVINE IS
FIRST STEPS
PROGRAM CONSULTANT

Pam Devine is now the program consultant for First Steps of Vanderburgh County. Pam works out of the Division of Family & Children office in Monroe County. Her address is 401 E. Miller Drive, Bloomington, IN 47401. She can be reached by phone at (812) 334-8227 or fax at (812) 334-7929. Her e-mail address is pdevine@fssa.state.in.us.



COORDINATOR'S OFFICE HAS MOVED
AND WILL HOLD OPEN HOUSE

The coordinator of the First Steps program, Philip Lieberman & Associates Inc., has new headquarters, on the third floor of the "Girl Scout Building." That office is located at 223 N.W. Second Street, Suite 300, Evansville, IN 47708-1239. Gary Heck's new direct phone number is (812) 434-6607, while his new fax line is (812) 434-6650. Gary's e-mail address remains the same: gary@firststeps.org.

To familiarize the people it serves with the company's new premises, Lieberman & Associates will host an open house on Thursday, April 24, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. The evening will include refreshments and a tour of the facility. Everyone is invited. For more information, contact Gary.

THERAPISTS NETWORKING GROUP BEGINS

Life Choice Women's Center, located at 2225 W. Indiana Street in Evansville, will be the site for the inaugural meeting of a local networking group for therapists in all fields (there are also no geographic limitations on who may participate). The meeting will be Friday, May 16, at noon. Bring your lunch as well as any questions, concerns and issues you might want to see addressed. Contact Ginger Whitler at (812) 455-5833 for more information.



...COLE CONTINUED



was two and Cathy went back to work. First Steps then helped schedule PT appointments at the Wilcoxes' home, in the early mornings, before Cathy went to work. At age two-and-a-half, Cole began walking.

Jane Wirth at The Rehab Center coordinated Cole's services. "She was great," Cathy says. "I can't say enough about The Rehab Center. It was awesome. It opened doors for Cole. It taught him how to interact with other kids and encouraged him to learn."

First Steps helped transition Cole into the EVSC Early Childhood Program when the boy turned three. Stan Wilm and his assistant, Kay Behnke, taught Cole's EVSC preschool program at The Rehab Center. Cole attended daycare at Milestones Child Development Center while he was enrolled at the preschool. The daycare made sure Cole was bused, via an EVSC bus, to The Rehab Center for his preschool, then returned to Milestones when he was done. While Cole attended EVSC preschool, he also received PT, OT, and speech therapy. He received those therapies at either Milestones or The Rehab Center. Toby says Cole was taught a lot at his preschool but the boy also learned at Milestones.

"We were in Stan and Kay's class for two years," says Toby, "when we got in with Nancy Rivers to see if we needed to get in the transition to kindergarten." Nancy is the EVSC Early Childhood Program Coordinator at the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation.

Nancy helped Cole enroll in West Terrace Elementary School's transitional kindergarten program last fall. Cathy cred-



its his teachers there – Cindy Korff and Barb Georgette, whom Cole calls "Jet" – with continuing the astounding progress Cole has made throughout the various programs he has participated in since he was one. "He's come leaps and bounds since being there," Cathy reports. "Cindy has him reading, doing math problems – even writing. That's what he's supposed to be having difficulties with, but Cole can spell his name now."

"If we didn't do this," adds Toby, "he'd be so far behind. It was a godsend that we found this out so early. Every teacher and therapist he's had has done a great job of encouraging Cole. He got the groundwork he needed and now he's going to be able to do much better in (elementary) school."

Toby says a regular kindergarten class holds about 30 students, while transitional kindergarten averages eight. This has meant Cole has received considerably more personal attention at West Terrace than he would have in a different kindergarten. "Cole would have been lost in a regular school," Toby comments.

Since Cole is considered a mildly delayed child, the Wilcoxes have been told he will most likely be integrated into regular classes when he enters first grade in fall 2003. What are his prospects for success in such a setting? Toby says, "I'm more optimistic now that he's gone through this first year with Mrs. Korff's class."

Cathy agrees. "We can see his ability to learn. Cole still has some delays but things are starting to come together. Before, he was getting the building blocks of learning. Now it's happening."

Her advice to parents who suspect their child has developmental delays is: "Deal with them early. Early intervention is the best. As a parent, you're informed, and your child can get the help they need." Both she and Toby find it hard to imagine where Cole's skill levels would be now had he not received all the therapy and instruction that have helped their son maximize his abilities.

Toby concludes, "It's amazing what they can do with even the little ones."

Vanderburgh County Step Ahead Council, Inc
FIRST STEPS
223 N.W. Second Street, Suite 300
Evansville, IN 47708-1239

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TIMELINE CHART & OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Many crucial service providers for local families who have young children with disabilities or developmental delays are included in the timeline chart that comprises half of this newsletter. The contact information for each of those organizations is also provided in that chart. We hope you will save the Timeline of Service Providers as a handy reference tool throughout the year.

Other important community resources besides those listed on the timeline chart also exist, although they are ones parents and caregivers may be less likely to access on a regular basis. Still, First Steps wants to make you aware of these facilities and agencies available to help you, your infants, toddlers and children under age six. You will find those resources listed in alphabetical order below:



Indiana Family & Social
Services Administration

402 W. Washington Street,
Indianapolis, IN 46207
Phone: (317) 233-4454
Fax: (317) 233-4693
Website: www.in.gov/fssa
Services Provided: Hoosier Healthwise – Indiana's federally mandated Children's Health Insurance Program provides health insurance for uninsured Hoosier children. Doctor visits, checkups, hospital stays, prescription drugs, vision and dental care, and more health-care benefits are covered under this program. FSSA also offers an online information resource for Hoosier families, called Developmental Disabilities Guide.
Ages Served: birth through 5

IN*SOURCE: Indiana Resource
Center for Families with
Special Needs

809 N. Michigan Street,
South Bend, IN 46601

Phone: (800) 332-4433 or
(574) 234-7101
Fax: (574) 234-7279
E-mail: insource@insource.org
Website: www.insource.org
Services Provided: This organization administers numerous federal, state and local projects that furnish Hoosier parents, families and service providers with the information and training necessary to ensure effective educational programs and appropriate services for special-needs children. IN*SOURCE offers interested parties a quarterly newsletter and advice on the latest strategies concerning early intervention and special education issues.
Ages Served: birth through 5

St. Mary's Dental Kare for Kids

Phone: (812) 449-3999
Fax: (812) 485-6770
Website: www.stmarys.org
Services Provided: This mobile unit serves children, usually covered by Medicaid, who do not have a cur-

rent dentist. The clinic furnishes x-rays and sealants plus basic cleaning, evaluations and restorative care. The unit visits some schools and St. Mary's Pediatric Clinic. Appointments are required.
Ages Served: 4 through 5

Tools for Children

P.O. Box 656, Poseyville, IN 47633-0656
Phone: (812) 874-3414
E-mail: general information: toolsforchildren@toolsforchildren.org looking for help: help@toolsforchildren.org
Website: www.toolsforchildren.org
Services Provided: This nonprofit organization reconditions computers, loads them with skill level-appropriate software, then provides them free to children with special needs in the area of communication (for example, kids who are autistic, nonverbal, visually impaired, and/or hearing impaired).
Ages Served: 17 months and upwards



SEEK HELP EARLY
QUICK INTERVENTION IS THE BEST FOR MAXIMIZING SKILLS

Cole Wilcox was born in May 1997 with high blood pressure, a heart murmur and a suspected more serious heart ailment. A month later, pediatric cardiologist Dr. Julio Morera examined Cole and recommended the boy go to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis for a catheterization. Toby and Cathy Wilcox, Cole's parents, complied. That visit revealed Cole had stenosis of his aorta and pulmonary artery.

Wondering if a genetic defect had caused Cole's unusual medical problems, Riley's staff requested that they be allowed to send Indiana University Genetics Laboratory a blood sample from Cole. His cardiologist suspected Cole had Williams syndrome, a genetic problem that can exhibit various symptoms, such as heart defects, elasticity of the arteries, and developmental delays in learning and speech.

Williams syndrome occurs rarely – only once in every 20,000 live births – and each case and its particular symptoms vary widely. The syndrome's traits can mimic some characteristics associated with Down syndrome. Those individuals suffering from acute cases sometimes die by age five.

An IU geneticist studied Cole's sample, then met with Toby and Cathy and confirmed their son did, indeed, have Williams syndrome. Fortunately, Cole's case was not too severe. Still, it resulted in the baby's blood pressure continuing to rise, which necessitated heart surgery when Cole was only six months old.

When Toby and Cathy attempt to recall the specifics of their life and Cole's at that time, everything seems to run together in a blur. For the first couple years of his life,

Cole never walked and he slept at most in two-hour increments, with his waking hours primarily spent in non-stop crying.

Even family members who came to help soon bailed out, perturbed at their inability to console or quiet Cole. Toby and Cathy walked around in a blur of sleeplessness, especially Cathy, who was then a stay-at-home mom. Both parents remember with deep gratitude The Rehabilitation Center and its tremendously supportive staff, who helped relieve the overburdened couple and their son.

Cathy says, "Everybody we've ever dealt with at The Rehab Center has been wonderful. They're there to help, and you can see that."

Toby concurs. "They work so well together, and



they try to meet each child's needs – and they communicate great with the parents."

"Through the cardiologist and geneticist is how we got the information regarding The Rehab Center," Toby recalls. "I think it was Dr. Morera who referred us."

The Rehab Center staff interviewed the Wilcoxes concerning Cole's diagnosis and needs, gathered further information on his case, and then

helped the family enroll in First Steps. "And we've been there every since," Toby reports with evident satisfaction.

"What was nice about First Steps," says Cathy, "was that they coordinated all Cole's services. I didn't have to go on a search quest to find out what he needed and who could provide those services. We do have a wonderful pediatrician, but not a lot of doctors know about all the syndromes, so it's nice to have a service that gets you that information and tells you what type of services you need."

Cathy says as a parent of a developmentally delayed child, one's time is already consumed by caring for the child. To have to do Internet searches and other research to discover what help one's child requires and then to seek out qualified providers for those needed services would add an almost insurmountable burden for parents like herself. Thankfully, Cathy reports, First Steps saved her and Toby from such a situation.

Her husband agrees wholeheartedly, plus adds another critical help that First Steps offers its clients. "What was beautiful about it was that Cole received twice a year evaluations. That let us know where Cole was (in his development) and where he needed to be."

When Cole was about one, he began in the center's playgroup for children his age. The group met an hour or two, one day a week. Cathy said Cole loved the swimming and other activities the group's instructors led their charges in.

Cole was in the playgroup for approximately six months, as best his mother can recall, when The Rehab Center also began providing him with both physical and occupational therapy. "He still wasn't walking yet. Cole was a scooter." Cathy stops speaking and laughs. "We didn't have any dust on our floors back then."

Cole stayed in his playgroup until he

CONTINUE...

Healthy Families

734 W. Delaware Street, Suite 206,
Evansville, IN 47710

Phone: (812) 423-5816

Fax: (812) 423-5294

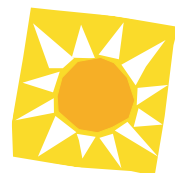
E-mail: healthyfamilies@netzero.net

Services Provided: This Youth Service Bureau program offers free, strength-based family support for expectant and new parents.

Families must be referred by one of ten collaborative medical or social service partners. Services include:

- 1) Family strengths and needs assessment with appropriate community referrals
- 2) Intensive home visitation (four graduated levels & two special-services levels) for participating families. Assistance includes: age appropriate fetal & child development education; parent/child interaction; nurturing/bonding; child development assessment; family needs assessment; goal setting & accomplishment; well & sick care for all family members; immunizations – complete by age two; appropriate community referrals for identified needs.

Ages Served: Prenatal through 5. (Note: Program enrollment must occur before a child is 90 days old)



Vanderburgh County Health Department

1 N.W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Suite 127,
Evansville, IN 47708

Phone: (812) 435-5694

Fax: (812) 435-5612

E-mail: vchd@evansville.net

Website: www.vchd.evvinidiana.org

Services Provided: Furnishes Vanderburgh County residents with health educational programs as well as a wide spectrum of services, including immunizations and well-baby clinics. Prenatal home visits are also offered.

Ages Served: prenatal through 5.



4C of Southern Indiana

1100 West Lloyd Expressway, Suite 115,
Evansville, IN 47710

Phone: (812) 423-4008

Fax: (812) 426-6138

E-mail: evv4c@child-care.org

Website: www.child-care.org

Services Provided: Vanderburgh County childcare resource and referral agency that furnishes information on available, local childcare via the agency's directory of licensed childcare centers, registered ministries, family daycare providers, preschool and nursery schools, and school-age programs.

Ages Served: birth through 5



Family 2 Family

Phone: Kasie Appel at 491-0979

E-mail: sionedkla@insightbb.com

Services Provided: Parents who have special-needs children serve as an information and support source as well as family point of contact for any parent or family member whose child is transitioning in or out of First Steps.

Ages Served: 1 through 3

The Rehabilitation Center

3701 Bellemeade Avenue, Evansville, IN 47714

Phone: (812) 479-1411

Fax: (812) 437-2636

E-mail: trizen@evansvillerehab.com

Services Provided: Comprehensive evaluations and developmental screenings; occupational, physical, and speech/language therapy; audiology services; psychological evaluations (child psychiatrist available once a week); counseling; adaptive equipment; site for EVSC therapeutic preschool; a parent-infant hearing-impaired specialized treatment program; medical clinics

Ages Served: birth through 5



Special Parents of Special Kids

Phone: Susan Bear at 867-6638

Services Provided:

- ◆ Support group for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities and/or developmental delays. Group meets from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at The Rehabilitation Center on the second Tuesday of each month, Sept. through May. Speakers often scheduled. Free childcare and snacks for children. Free meal for parents.
- ◆ Respite opportunity provided to families once a year for three to four hours, usually on a Saturday in November.

Ages Served: Families of special-needs children aged 1 month or older

Milestones Child Development Center

621 S. Cullen, Evansville, IN 47715

Phone: (812) 474-2244

Fax: (812) 474-2242

E-mail: cbaker@evansvillerehab.com

Services Provided: This childcare center serves special-needs children and offers them a learning curriculum and socialization skills. Outside therapists can provide their services to a child at the center. The center also offers a mothers' morning-out program, called Circle of Friends, for which children must be enrolled.

Ages Served:

- ◆ Childcare (6:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Mon. - Fri.) - 6 weeks to 6 years
- ◆ Circle of Friends - (8:30 - 11:30 a.m., Th.) - 15 to 23 months; (8:30 - 11:30 a.m., Mon., Tues., Wed., Fri.) - 2-year-olds

PRENATAL

BIRTH

1

2

3

4

5

6

First Steps of Vanderburgh County

c/o Philip Lieberman & Associates Inc.,
First Steps Coordinator,
223 NW Second Street, Suite 300,
Evansville IN 47708

Phone: (812) 434-6607

Fax: (812) 434-6650

E-mail: gary@firststeps.org

Website: www.firststeps.org

Services Provided: First Steps coordinates federal, state, local, and private funds to develop and execute comprehensive, coordinated and community-based early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities or developmental delays or who are at-risk for such delays. First Steps informs their families about screening opportunities, its system point of entry, the referral process, local service providers and procedural safeguards. First Steps also has a lending library and training-assistance funds for parents.

Ages Served: birth to 3



Vanderburgh County System Point of Entry (SPOE)

621 S. Cullen Avenue, Evansville, IN 47715

Phone: (812) 474-2345

Fax: (812) 474-2242

E-mail: fsspoe84@evansville.net

Services Provided: Serves as the intake point for First Steps' Early Intervention System, which offers evaluation for disabilities and developmental delays, then offers referrals and intake assistance to appropriate service providers.

Ages Served: birth to 3



Evansville Association for the Blind

500 Second Avenue, Evansville, IN 47710

Phone: (812) 422-1181 – ext. 142 for

Orientation & Mobility consultation

Phone: (812) 422-1181 ext. 120 or 421-4535

ext. 120 – Parent-Infant Program

Fax: (812) 424-3154

E-mail: eabcdc@evansville.net

Website: www2.Evansville.edu/ebaweb

Services Provided: For the visually impaired, assessments are furnished as well as training in orientation, mobility, traveling skills and tactile skills. Services can be provided at the agency or at a child's home, daycare, or preschool. Parents receive consultation services, counseling, home visitation, and access to a resource library, to ensure that their children have the best possible opportunity to succeed. A toy lending library with toys appropriate for visually impaired children is available.

Ages served:

- ◆ Orientation & Mobility consultation – 3 and above
- ◆ Parent-Infant Program – birth through 5

Community Action Program of Evansville

27 Pasco Avenue, Evansville, IN 47713

◆ Early Head Start

Phone: (812) 425-5291

Fax: (812) 425-5294

E-mail: llukens@aol.com

Services Provided: Early Head Start offers early childhood development programming for infants and toddlers from 6 weeks to 3 years of age who come from low-income families. As their schedules permit, the program's Home-Based Visitors also provide prenatal services to expectant moms.

Ages Served: prenatal to 3

◆ Head Start

Phone: (812) 452-3122

Fax: (812) 452-3129

E-mail: lboeglin@capeevansville.org

Services Provided: Early childhood development programming for young children from low-income families.

Ages Served: 3 to 5

Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation

705 South Barker Avenue,
Evansville, IN 47712

Phone: (812) 435-8586

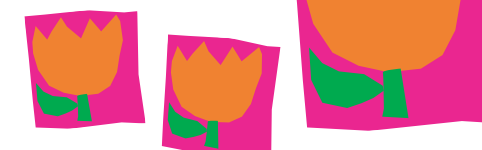
Fax: (812) 435-8586

E-mail: ndr1021em@evsc.k12.in.us

Website: www.evsc.k12.in.us

Services Provided: EVSC Early Childhood Program – this program offers free assessments and services to special-needs children. A multidisciplinary team works with the parents to evaluate a child's abilities and needs. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) establishes the appropriate services the child is to receive. Preschool and transitional kindergarten are offered.

Ages Served: 3 through 5



Evansville ARC Child Life Center

615 W. Virginia Street, Evansville, IN 47710

Phone: (812) 428-5433

Fax: (812) 421-8537

E-mail: dgilham@evansvillearc.org

Website: www.evansvillearc.org

Services Provided: In its classrooms, activity room, and special needs-accessible playground, this licensed day-care facility offers integrated care and education to children with and without disabilities. With the capacity to serve over 160 children, the home-like center has licensed teachers instructing students in a model child-development curriculum. Attendees 3 and older learn coordination, rhythm and movement through dance instruction. Participants under age 3 who have developmental disabilities or who are at-risk of developmental delays can receive therapies at the center or at home, via the facility's Early Intervention Program.

Those services include occupational, physical, speech and developmental therapies.

Ages Served: 6 weeks to 5 years

